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Ronnie's millionaire-brand Kitchen Cabinet

Cabinet

WASHINGTON—Ronald Reagan is still said to be working out his Cabinet choices, so the net worth of his official family cannot yet be calculated. But whatever the financial worth of his real Cabinet turns out to be, it can be said right now that the old friends and associates who are



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assisting Reagan in the selection process—16 millionaires known as Reagan's "Kitchen Cabinet"—would make the Eisenhower administration's famed financial biggies look like a bunch of pikers.

The group is formally known as Reagan's transition advisory committee on personnel, and it includes some of the former California governor's political advisers and several persons who

will serve on his White House staff—people like longtime aide Edwin Meese 3d, who has already been named presidential counselor; California public relations man Michael Deaver, who is expected to be a top White House adviser; William J. Casey, a wealthy New York lawyer who will probably be named director of the CIA; former Treasury Secretary William Simon, slated for the same post in the Reagan administration; and Sen. Paul Laxalt (R-Nev.), chairman of Reagan's campaign.

But the real power in the Kitchen Cabinet is wielded by a relatively small group of California millionaires who were instrumental in luring Reagan into running for governor of the state against Democrat Edmund G. (Pat) Brown Sr., Jerry Brown's father, in 1966 and who have guided his career ever since.

First among equals in this group is Justin Dart, 73, chairman of Dart & Kraft Inc., a crusty, outspoken dynamo of a businessman who likes to think of the Kitchen Cabinet as a "cross-section" of America.

It was Dart and William French Smith, 62, a highly successful real-estate attorney and Reagan's personal lawyer, and multimillionaire Southern California Ford dealer Holmes Tuttle, 75, who were instrumental in bringing Reagan into the political arena 15 years ago.

Along with the late A.C. (Cy) Rubel, chairman of the board of Union Oil Co., and oilman Henry Salvatori, the group determined that the man who spoke more eloquently and forcefully on behalf of Sen. Barry M. Goldwater and his ill-fated conservative crusade of 1964 than Goldwater himself, simply had to assume the leadership of the Republican Party's conservative wing.

In addition to Smith, Dart, and Tuttle, the current

Reagan advisory committee includes, among others, Alfred Bloomingdale, W. Glenn Campbell, head of the Hoover Institute, a conservative think-tank; Earle M. Jorgensen, 82, chairman of Jorgensen Steel; Jack Wrather, 62, head of the Wrather Corp., an oil, entertainment (it owns the rights to "Lassie") and real-estate conglomerate; Theodore E. Cummings, 72, founder of the Food Giant supermarket empire; and Jaquelin Hume of San Francisco, president of Basic Vegetable Products Inc.

Just how important is this Kitchen Cabinet in terms of shaping the Reagan presidency? "Very important," is the cryptic response of a Reagan insider, "not only in picking his top people, but in shaping policies."

When Reagan was elected to his first term as California governor, the original, smaller Kitchen Cabinet led by Smith was charged with conducting an exhaustive talent search to come up with bright, young, conservative managers to fill the top slots in state government. Not only that, but the members also freely advised Reagan on important policy decisions.

Throughout Reagan's first campaign against Pat Brown, California Democrats viewed the powerful group as "mystery men" who would manipulate the politically inexperienced Reagan for their own ultraconservative political ends.

That charge fell flat, however, since none of the inner circle seemed to want anything for themselves. They were all wealthy, powerful persons in their own right who sought neither appointments to high office nor government contracts for their businesses.

The larger, slightly more diverse Kitchen Cabinet has more competition for President-elect Reagan's ear than the initial group. Reagan insiders point out that he must also heed advice from the Republican establishment, particularly former President Gerald Ford and top officials in the Nixon and Ford administrations, and Republican leaders in the Congress.

Yet it is also true that the list of 70 prospective appointees for the 13 Cabinet posts he must fill that Reagan is currently studying on his ranch near Santa Barbara is a list that was compiled by the Kitchen Cabinet.

Reagan insiders, defensive about how big a role the Kitchen Cabinet may have in the Reagan administration, argue that most Presidents have, in the past, relied on advice from longtime friends and associates. After all, FDR had his "Brain Trust," Truman had his "Poker Cabinet," John F. Kennedy had the "Irish Mafia" and Jimmy Carter had his Georgians.